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Big-city administrators face a multitude of problems falling under three general headings--finance, discontent, and educational programs. Factors contributing to the financial problems in big cities include (1) the decline in the proportion of manufacturing employment compared to that of suburban areas, (2) decreases in taxable assessed valuation, and (3) the failure of State and Federal aid to equalize the maldistribution of local available resources. Discontent is evidenced by teacher militancy, parent alienation from the power structure of the system, and student activists rebelling against authority. One writer argues that the trouble with much of the education of disadvantaged children is that it is not quality education. Compensatory education has been an attempt to correct this situation, but with only marginal success. There has been an abundance of programs, projects, and processes introduced to improve urban education, including Head Start, Upward Bound, the Teachers Corps, Central Cities Projects (CCP), and many others. Under the auspices of CCP both old and new programs are being used to improve inner-city education in such cities as Syracuse, Seattle, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, San Diego, Memphis, and New Orleans. (HW)

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MONITORING THE URBAN EDUCATION FRONT

by George B. Redfern, AASA Assoc. Secy.

On the front cover of the January issue of the magazine, Atlas, appeared a picture of a hapless person seated backwards in a rowboat about to drift disasterously over the edge of a waterfall into the rocks and turbulence below. Simultaneously the occupant was busily trying to open his umbrella to fend off some raindrops falling from above.

To some, this pathetic picture may depict the plight of education on the urban front. Several large city school systems face the spectre of massive disaster, as the Atlas picture depicts, and yet seem only feebly able to open umbrellas to cope with the raindrops of peripheral perplexity.

That school administrators in large cities daily face vicissitudes of almost catastrophic proportion goes without saying. In imagination, pretend that we are seated in the control room of a TV studio. Before us are several receiving

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monitors. A wide range of choices of pictures are offered. Each describes some aspect of the urban education front. The camera is far more capable of depicting what is than what can be done about the predicament of urban education.

The monitors provide a panorama of the dilemma facing large city school systems.

Monitor #1 The financial dilemma.

Alan K. Campbell, of the Maxwell Graduate School at Syracuse University, writing in the January 11, issue of Saturday Review highlights the inequities of school finance in big city school systems. The evidence he details to show these inequities is convincing. For example, he indicates the "obvious need for more resources in city schools", yet "we are spending less--any way you measure it--in cities than in the suburbs". He points out that for the 37 largest

U.S. metropolitan areas:

Average per capita expenditure for education

-- $82 in the central cities

-- $113 in the suburbs

On a per student basis

-- $449 in the central cities

-- $573 in the suburbs

AND THE GAP IS WIDENING

Campbell points out further that central cities are losing ground in their capacity to meet service requirements of their citizens, while requirements for increased services are mounting. He shows, for example, that of the "central cities of 12 large metropolitan areas that the proportion of manufacturing employment compared to that of suburban areas has clearly declined over the past three decades". The figures speak for themselves.

Percentage of manufacturing employment (12 cities)

--1929	=	66%
--1947	=	61%
--1958	=	49%

STILL DROPPING

Another index of the inequities of school finance in big cities is that of taxable assessed valuations--the source of local property taxes--has declined in several large cities and has barely held its own in others. Campbell shows, for example, that in a recent 5-year period "the percentage changes in taxable assessed valuation for seven cities were:"

Baltimore	-	down 11%
Boston	-	down 1%
Buffalo	-	down 1%
Detroit	-	down 2%
St. Louis	-	up 1%
Philadelphia	-	up 3%
Cleveland	-	down 3%

One more evidence of the inequities in finance in large city school systems is "the failure of aid either state or federal, to fill the gap left by the unequal distribution of local resources available". Campbell shows, for example:

State and federal aid for public expenditures		
27%	-	in central cities
29%	-	in suburbs
37%	-	in rest of country

Some may be under the impression that recent federal aid to education favored inner city pupils. Former U.S. Commissioner, Harold Howe II, pointed out before he left USOE that there was a decline from 1966 to 1969 in the federal dollars allocated for improving the educational opportunities of children from poor families--the principle clients of inner city schools. For example:

Amount appropriated per child		
1966	-	$ 206
1969	-	$ 148 (approximate)

Campbell concludes that "state education formulas provide greater aid to suburban than to city districts". He pointed out that, while current data was impossible to obtain, that for 1962--which was available--showed this disparity very well. For example, in that year:

Per capita education aid (1962)		
--In central cities	-	$20.73
--In suburbs	-	$37.66

Additional data might be marshalled to verify the disparity in financial resources between central cities, suburbs, and the rest of the country. Perhaps enough has been provided to highlight this important aspect of urban education problems. Let's view:

Monitor #2 - Voices of Discontent

Vignettes of discontent can be seen in abundance in large city systems. Teacher militancy tends to be virulent and prevalent. Discontent with teaching conditions has caused a widespread exodus of many middle class white teachers to the suburbs, creating a teacher shortage that has persisted for more than two decades.

Parents whose children attend inner city schools have become increasingly alienated from the power structure of the system itself. A proliferation of peripheral activist groups fan the flame of disillusionment and discontent, but--more often than not--in forcing confrontation for its own sake rather than in quest of reasoned solutions. That citizen groups do have legitimate complaints is not denied. The quality and adequacy of educational experiences for many inner city children are the object of deep concern not only to parents but to educational

leaders themselves. To argue that inner city children are equally able to compete with their suburban counterparts would be absurd. The task is, however, to find ways to overcome the deficits that have caused the inequities.

The great difficulty is to get responsible dialogue among the groups who are vitally concerned. Dissenting voices call for a wide variety of "solutions", some of which would seem to have dubious credibility.

Teacher organizations demand that they be given greater power to make management decisions. Pupil activists rebel against teacher and administrative authority. Superintendents and boards of education are charged with being bureaucratic, aloof, and unresponsive. Some community groups and foundations call for decentralization and community control of schools. Teacher unions strike to maintain organizational safeguards. Teacher negotiations win contracts that require expenditures in excess of tax revenues. Voters turn down levies. School

systems face functional bankruptcy. State legislatures and state governments are sued by local school systems to provide more revenue for systems in financial distress.

School administrators and boards of education in large cities, thus, are confronted with an incessant barrage of complaints and criticisms. Dissent and discord elevate the level of pressure under which the day's work must be done. It is not surprising that these conditions are levying a heavy toll upon the intellectual, physical, and nervous strength of school administrators who are striving to give leadership in large city school systems. The erosion of administrative leadership in big cities is on the increase and is a great drain upon the manpower resources so urgently needed in this area of educational endeavor.

And now to:

Monitor #3 Educational Program

Diana Ravitch, consultant for the Carnegie Corporation, wrote in the April

1968 issue of The Urban Review on the subject, "Programs, Placebos, and Panaceas".

Her argument was that the trouble with much of the education of disadvantaged children is that it is not quality education. Rather, it is substandard in quality. To correct the situation, compensatory education has been introduced with marginal success.

She indicates that:

> . . . ."The public and professional debate about compensatory education has focused on such issues as: Does it work? For what age student is it most effective? Which kind of student responds best to it? How many years of it are required to remove "disadvantage" to childrens' learning capacity?. . . ."

She points out that there are two basic assumptions underlying the idea of compensatory education; namely,

(1) Special services for culturally disadvantaged children

(2) It is temporary, being required only until the youngster has been "compensated" and can re-join his more advantaged peers.

Hear her analysis of compensatory education:

> "Various compensatory education programs claim to have developed a special means of 'reaching' their students; a kind of mystique has emerged with special techniques and special languages which are applicable only to the culturally disadvantaged. But the unmystical fact is that the best of these programs despite any gimmicks, would be as exciting to a middle-class child as to a lower-class child. Their common elements have nothing to do with cultural deprivation and everything to do with the education as it should be for all children."

I cite this article to stress the fact that educational programs in large cities are undergoing the sharpest scrutiny. The intervention of compensatory efforts, as the result of federal funds provided by ESEA programs, has produced conflicting evidence as to how best to strengthen educational programs in big cities.

Miss Ravitch argues in the concluding portion of her article that if <u>quality education</u> is to become a reality for all children, that:

--the right questions have to be asked

--as long as the everyday diet of education is inappropriate, there can be no easy answers

--everyone wants to see more money for remedial service, smaller classes, and other enrichment devices

--most urban school systems are saddled with over-centralized bureaucracies; they zealously guard their power; and effectively throttle change

--institutional reform must come first before curriculum change

--roles of teachers, principals, and students have to be re-defined

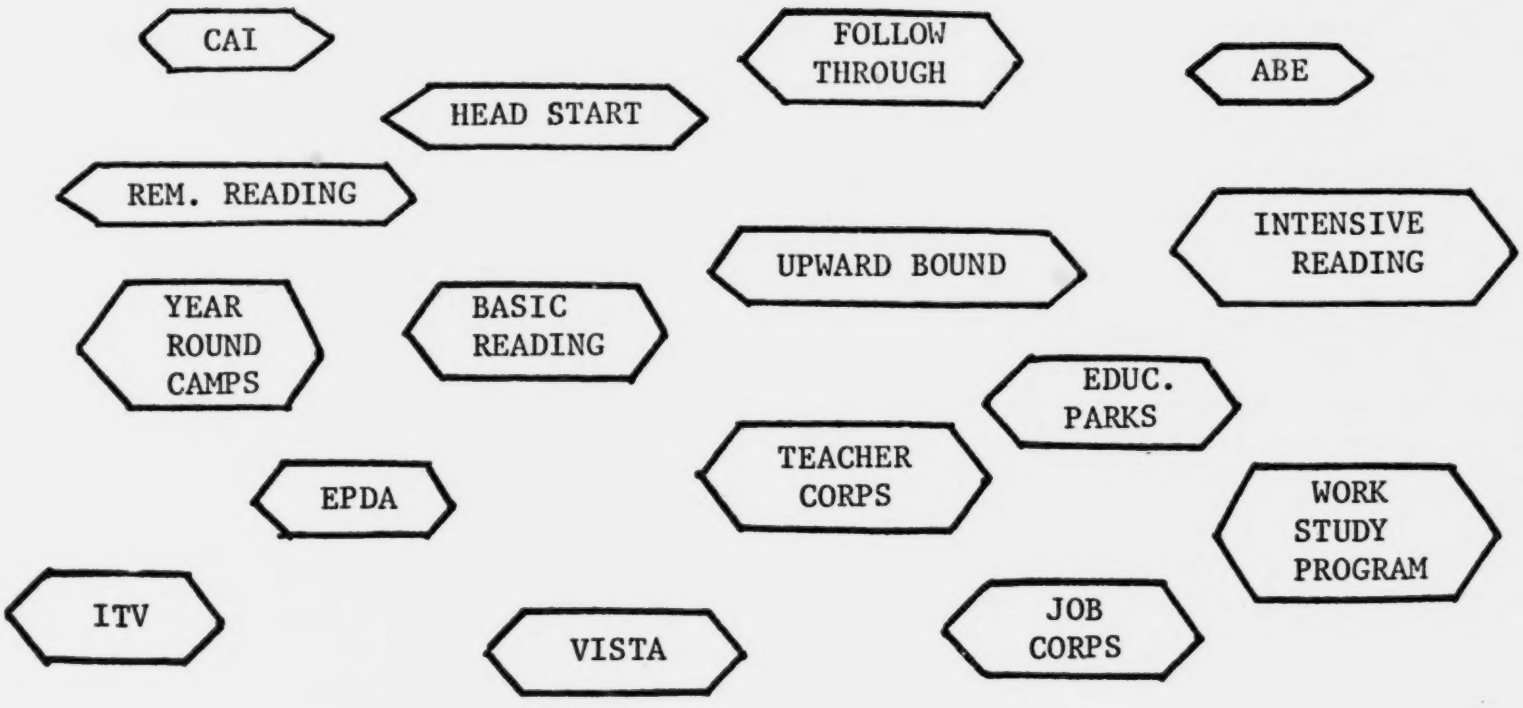
Her concluding paragraph echoes the voices of an increasing number of professional and lay critics of education in big cities:

"Though it was not planned that way, compensatory education has become a channel for demonstrating the ineffectiveness of traditional public education, for altering the dialogue among educators, and for infiltrating new ideas and new techniques into the schools. It would be a mistake to see compensatory education as a salvage and reclamation component of the old order. Its universal implications have given impetus to a new spirit of inquiry into the basic purpose and procedures of education that will not easily be satisfied".

The fourth and final view of urban education can be seen on:

Monitor #4 Plethora of Panaceas

There has been a super-abundance of programs, projects, and processes introduced to improve urban education. An exhaustive list would be forbiddenly long. Recall some of the more well-known remedies:



Pre-school education has been stressed widely with particular emphasis upon Head Start and Upward Bound Programs. Remedial reading of various kinds has been widely emphasized. Computer-assisted instruction is one of the more glamorous efforts toward improving instruction. Likewise, instructional television has been a useful tool in many school systems.

In order to increase the supply of better qualified teachers to work in inner city schools, the Teacher Corps, although never properly financed, has been utilized by many school systems extensively. EPDA now promises to up-grade educational leadership personnel. Job Corps and Vista are examples of efforts

made to work with out-of-school youth. Adult Basic Education programs, although serving more than a million eighteen or older adults, has really not touched the needs of approximately twenty-three million other functionally illiterate adults in this country.

Efforts have been made in many large cities to change organizational structures, boundary lines of school attendance units, etc. in order to bring about better racial balance. Educational Parks, pairing of adjacent schools, and bussing programs have been widely utilized for this purpose.

Another series of projects which illustrate intensive efforts to improve urban education are those known as CCP (Central Cities Projects) under the auspices of the U.S. Office of Education.

Under the auspices of CCP both old and new programs are being used to improve inner city education. These three year projects are closely tied to the Model Cities Program and stress, to a very substantial degree, wider

community involvement in the educational process. In Syracuse, New York, for example, the "Campus Plan", will house eighteen thousand elementary school children in four Educational Parks. The first "campus" is scheduled to open in 1971 and presumably will replace most of the obsolete school buildings in the system. The major objective of the "Campus Plan" is racial integration. All children will be bussed to school.

Continuous Progress Centers, are being carried out in Seattle. These are demonstration centers for grades K-4. They are non-graded and stress individualized instruction, hopefully, to ensure optimum progress.

In Los Angeles, two educational complexes will be established in Negro and Mexican-American communities. The objective is to develop innovative practices for these urban areas. The complexes will include grades K-12, and will include an adult education school, child welfare services, and courses for adults in

family relationships.

Milwaukee is experimenting with decentralization in five schools in a predominantly Negro area. An Advisory Council, consisting of teachers, parents, principals, supervisors, and a teacher elected by the students is to function. The central Board of Education, however, will continue to maintain final control over the decentralized unit.

San Diego is establishing a model bi-lingual program which is aimed at re-inforcing a student's pride in the Mexican language and culture.

A Community Learning Laboratory is being established in Memphis with the purpose of creating and demonstrating innovative programs and services. In New Orleans, a model for educating students with diverse backgrounds is being set up.

While these CCP projects are in the formative stages, they indicate the

range of effort being made by city school systems throughout the country to improve urban education.

On the panel today are three gentlemen who can speak with greater specificity and clarity about particular areas in which they are interested and working. I have refrained from discussing their specific efforts preferring rather to let them speak for themselves.

I would like to close with an excerpt from Art Buchwald's December 29 column entitled, "True Slum Clearance". Buchwald facetiously writes a question and answer column on this subject.

Q. What do you foresee as far as the urban crisis is concerned?

A. I predict that there will be 2678 task force committees set up to study urban problems. Their reports will be written after 34, 875 sub-committees investigate conditions in the cities. The work will be documented by funds from 65,978 tax-free foundations. Once all the reports are collated, they will be turned over to a congressional committee whose chairman comes from a small Southern town with a population of 3567 people. He'll reluctantly promise to hold hearings on the crisis in 1975.

Q. Then you don't see Congress doing anything about the cities?

A. Only if you move the slums to the suburbs.

Naturally, I hope this facetious prediction will not become the ultimate reality of urban education in this country.

George B. Redfern
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